

News Release

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CSLB Catches Felons, Other Known Criminals in Statewide Undercover Sting Operations

California Blitz highlights serious risks consumers take when hiring unlicensed contractors

STING VIDEO: http://youtu.be/qg5e_zSN4VA

DIGITAL PHOTOS: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cslb/sets/72157648804478649/>

SACRAMENTO – One hundred twelve people may face criminal charges after being caught by the [Contractors State License Board](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) (CSLB) in simultaneous undercover sting operations conducted November 5-6, 2014, in seven cities throughout the state.

“Several of the suspects we targeted turned out to be repeat offenders and criminals with a history of violent crimes and drug violations,” said [CSLB Registrar Steve Sands](#). “If you knew their backgrounds, you’d never allow them into your home.”

Among those caught during CSLB’s fall California Blitz were 11 repeat offenders, one sex offender, five suspects with active arrest warrants, two suspects on probation, and three former CSLB licensees. Suspects who turned out to have serious criminal backgrounds were targeted because of ads they posted on craigslist.org.

Investigators from CSLB’s [Statewide Investigative Fraud Team \(SWIFT\)](#) partnered with a variety of local law enforcement agencies to conduct the operations at homes in Chula Vista (San Diego County), Alhambra (Los Angeles County), Rancho Mirage (Riverside County), Aptos (Santa Cruz County), Montecito (Santa Barbara County), Castro Valley (Alameda County), and West Sacramento (Yolo County).

SWIFT investigators called suspected unlicensed operators for home improvement bids that included painting, landscaping, decking, flooring, drywall, fencing, masonry, concrete, retaining walls, pool tile, and tree removal work.

All 112 individuals arrested may face misdemeanor charges for contracting without a license ([Business and Professions Code section 7028](#)). The penalty for a conviction is up to six months in jail and/or a fine of up to \$5,000.

Eighty-eight suspects also may be charged with illegal advertising ([Business and Professions Code section 7027.1](#)). State law requires contractors to place their license number in all print, broadcast, and online advertisements. Those without a license can advertise to perform jobs valued at less than \$500, but the ad must state that they are not a licensed contractor. The penalty is a fine of \$700 to \$1,000.

Six others may be charged with requesting an excessive down payment ([Business and Professions Code section 7159.5](#)). In California, a home improvement project down payment cannot exceed 10 percent of the contract total or \$1,000, whichever is less. This misdemeanor charge carries a maximum penalty of six months in jail and/or up to a \$5,000 fine.

Nine of the phony contractors also were issued Stop Orders ([Business and Professions Code section 7127](#)). CSLB investigators can halt job site activity when any person, with or without a contractor license, does not have workers' compensation insurance coverage for employees. Failure to comply with a Stop Order can result in misdemeanor charges and penalties, including 60 days in jail and/or up to \$10,000 in fines.

"Seven of the suspects were brazenly using contractor license numbers that belong to legitimate contractors," added Sands. "Always be sure to check your contractor's license number on the CSLB website and ask the contractor for photo identification to verify the person's identity."

Blitz totals may increase as some suspects are expected to provide their bids at a later date to undercover investigators via text, email or fax.

STING NOTES

Contact CSLB for suspect lists from the various sting locations.

Chula Vista (San Diego County)

- *One car was towed after the owner was booked in jail on an outstanding \$10,000 warrant for previous contracting violations; another paid his previous contractor violations and then continued to contract illegally.*

Alhambra (Los Angeles County)

- *Three suspects were booked on outstanding warrants (regarding drugs, traffic, and illegal contracting charges) and a previously cited individual on probation was again arrested.*

Rancho Mirage (Riverside County)

- *Individuals previously arrested for unlicensed contracting and first-time offenders ranged in age from 23 to 71.*

Montecito (Santa Barbara County)

- *Those arrested included an individual on felony probation, and several previously caught for unlicensed contracting. Angry for being caught a second time, one individual tried to put a hex on the investigators.*

West Sacramento (Yolo County)

- *Three were caught illegally using contractor license numbers belonging to legitimate contractors; one tried to flee but was caught by officers.*

Castro Valley (Alameda County)

- *One individual was processed on site for an outstanding arrest warrant; two bidders were cited for failing to be registered as Home Improvement Salespersons.*

Aptos (Santa Cruz County)

- *Two individuals illegally used the CSLB contractor license number of another person as their own.*

Partnering agencies are noted below.

Location	Notices to Appear	Partner Agencies
Alhambra <i>Los Angeles County</i>	11	Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office Alhambra Police Department
Aptos <i>Santa Cruz County</i>	14	Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office California Department of Insurance
Castro Valley <i>Alameda County</i>	25	Alameda County District Attorney's Office
Chula Vista <i>San Diego County</i>	17	San Diego County District Attorney's Office Chula Vista Police Department Department of Consumer Affairs – Division of Investigation
Montecito <i>Santa Barbara County</i>	20	Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office
Rancho Mirage <i>Riverside County</i>	15	Riverside County District Attorney's Office Rancho Mirage Police Department Department of Consumer Affairs – Division of Investigation
West Sacramento <i>Yolo County</i>	10, plus 2 who face felony charges for using another's license	Yolo County District Attorney's Office

CSLB encourages consumers to always “Check the License First” by visiting www.cslb.ca.gov or calling CSLB's toll-free automated line 800.321.CSLB (2757). Also, visit CSLB's website for [tips](#) about how to hire a contractor and to sign up for [CSLB email alerts](#).

The California Contractors State License Board operates under the umbrella of the Department of Consumer Affairs. CSLB licenses and regulates California's 290,000 contractors, and is regarded as one of the leading consumer protection agencies in the United States. In fiscal year 2013-14, CSLB helped recover nearly \$51 million in ordered restitution for consumers.

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